



Involving Fathers

January 2008



DHS case reading data indicates that 80% [n=626] of children's parents reviewed between August 2007 and October 2007 were involved in case planning.

'Half of a child's family relationships reside with the father. When you cut off fathers, you cut off grandma's and grandpas, aunts and uncles, cousins and other that could service as valuable resources in that child's life.'

Expectation: Caseworker visits with child/ren and parents are required to occur at least monthly. Our current performance is 69% of children who are subject to the CFSR review are visited at least monthly. Our current performance is 49% of parents are visited at least monthly.

Did you Know?

A good father is critical to the optimal development and well-being of a child. Fathers roles in children's lives effect their healthy child development, gender identity, responsible sexuality, emotional and social commitment, and financial security. While research shows father involvement benefits children's well-being, the child welfare system seems to contradict this in it's practice at all levels of the continuum - child protective services, foster care, kinship care, adoption, and family preservation.

Diligent Efforts to Engage:

Diligent efforts must be made to identify, locate, evaluate, and engage fathers of children in foster care in planning for their child.

Diligent search is a continuous process of searching for and engaging fathers to provide to maintain children's connections with people who are important in their lives.

Activities that support a diligent search includes but are not limited to:

- ☐ Asking the mother and the child to assist in locating and engaging the father
- ☐ FTDM meetings that focus on maintaining family relationships and connections and consider the best placement option for the child.
- ☐ Completing a genogram as part of the family assessment for both biological parents.
- ☐ With the signed consent of the parent, contacting other relatives to see if they have

any known addresses or telephone/cell phone numbers, and follow-up on those leads. Engage these relatives in supporting the involvement of the father in the child's life.

- ☐ If applicable, request Court Assistance to order the cooperation of the parents.
- ☐ Use the People Locator Search Engines available on the Internet.

DHS should document all efforts to identify, locate and engage the father in the child's case narrative and individualized case permanency plan. A genogram is a useful tool in identifying relatives that might provide additional information.

In the search for family supports, the most valuable source of information is often the child. Children are often able to share the names and general locations of family members or kin who have known and cared about them. Other family members (even those who are not able to have contact with the child) can provide critical information about who else can help. A search may also involve researching child welfare records. Initial child protection records typically will have contact names and numbers for fathers who have long since been disconnected from the child's life.

If appropriate to the child's developmental explore the child's relationship with his father.

Good enough to pass on.

This article is adapted from material found on these websites:

- ☐ http://ssw.unc.edu/fcrp/Cspn/vol11_no1.htm
- ☐ <http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/downloads/newsletter/BPNPSummer02.pdf>

If you would like further information regarding CFSR please contact Krys Lange, CFSR State Coordinator:

klange@dhs.state.ia.us

Compiled by Child and Family Services Division, Iowa Department of Human Services



What do we need to understand?	What do we need to do?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">❑ Fatherhood is fragile for non-residential fathers in child welfare and are at high risk for non-involvement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❑ Engage fathers and use skilled ongoing work to shore up the relationship of foster children with their fathers.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">❑ Father involvement is closely connected to the relationship to the mother and is the single greatest determinant of father involvement. Mothers exercise disproportionate control over parenting. Mothers need to understand and participate in a family system that is more open to male involvement, in ways that do not threaten their own roles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❑ Mediation and negotiation are effective strategies and tools to promote the advantages of a father's involvement.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">❑ Grandparents and extended family influence father's involvement with foster children. We need to understand the dynamics of intergenerational families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❑ Family team meetings need to incorporate the knowledge and skills to work with intergenerational dynamics to help fathers gain and maintain access to their children.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">❑ Father involvement requires understanding and transitions. Many fathers have difficulty sustaining emotional ties and social commitments when they experience risk factors such as substance abuse, poverty, mental health issues and unemployment. To keep them involved requires understanding, and emphasizing life transitions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❑ Help residential and non-residential fathers understand the changing roles that accompany major milestones such as pregnancy, birth and child rearing.❑ Transitions resulting from divorce may require more intensive services, monitoring, supervision, and supports that help father build continuity in relationships with children.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">❑ Assessment, case planning, and case reviews should be seen as opportunities to promote responsible fatherhood. Participation in life events for the child and rituals are the building blocks for engagement [e.g. birthdays, holidays, school activities, church activities etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❑ Case planning can be designed to help increase father's ability to provide familiar, stable, and even daily routines that will help create important resources in a child's life.❑ Use events in the child's life to engage fathers in their children's lives.



CHILD WELFARE PARTNERS
CHANGING FUTURES by SHARING RESPONSIBILITY
From New Mexico Best Practice Bulletin

As a JUDGE, you would order child-parent visitation, providing that it is in the best interest of the child to have contact with his/her parent. If contact visitation is not available, you would inquire about the availability of visitation through telephone or video conferencing or some other means of preserving the connection to the parent. You would order parenting classes as a part of the treatment plan.

As a CASEWORKER, you would help inform the child of their parent's whereabouts and facilitate contact quickly after placement of the child. You would acknowledge the child's needs and refer them to services in their schools or communities that work with children who need support or services to develop a relationship with their father. You would ensure that the child is able to communicate with and visit his/her parent, and advocate for contact visitation. If appropriate, you would arrange for coached or supported visits. If contact visitation is not available, you would advocate for frequent visitation through telephone or video conferencing.

As CORRECTIONAL FACILITY STAFF, you would support quality parenting education in prisons and help create a child-friendly visiting area where contact visits can take place. You would also be respectful of children during visitation and encourage others to do the same.

As a CHILD'S ATTORNEY, you would present to the court a plan for parent-child visitation or other contact that is in the best interest of the child.

As a GAL, in accordance with the wishes of your client or the best interests of the child, you would advocate for parent-child contact visitation. You would talk with the child about visitation issues, and whether or not he/she would like to have contact visitation with her parent. If contact visitation is not available, you would advocate for visitation by telephone or video conferencing.

As a PARENT'S ATTORNEY, you would advocate for visitation and other contact for your client with his/her child.

As a CASA VOLUNTEER, you would visit the child in his/her current placement and help ensure that he/she understands and is aware of the whereabouts of his/her parent. You would become familiar with the issues that children with non-resident parents face and be prepared to educate others. You would help advocate for the child to be connected to other children with nonresident fathers. You would report your observations and recommendations to the court.

As a FCRBRB MEMBER, you would inquire about the child's needs, the services being provided, and the child's progress in foster care. You would inquire about the parent's treatment plan and the available services for non-custodial or non-resident fathers. You would document observations and recommendations in the FCRB report.

As a PARENT, you would express to the judge your desire to be connected to your children. You would ask for contact visitation with your children. If contact or other visitation is not available, you would participate in telephone and video visits.

As a FOSTER PARENT, you would help inform the child about his/her parent's whereabouts and current situation. If appropriate, you would help facilitate communication and contact visitation by providing transportation and support. You would help advocate for needed services and support systems for the child.

As a CHILD or YOUTH, you would talk to the judge, your caseworker, your GAL or attorney, or your CASA about your wishes as they pertain to visiting your parent. In order to maintain consistent contact with your parent, you would write letters, send pictures, and talk on the telephone in his/her absence.